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CIA/ONE-STAFF MEM/62-601

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

29 September 1961

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 62-61 (Internal O/NE Working Paper - CIA
Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: UN Prospects

1. With Dag Hammarskjold's death, the UN precipitately turned a corner long anticipated and long avoided by the West. The organization is suddenly faced with fundamental questions about its structure and functioning embodied in the Soviet "troika" proposal and the admission of Communist China. Equally important, however, the death of the Secretary General and the constitutional crisis it has created promises to accelerate what was already a rapid shift in the power balance of the member nations. The era of predominant Western influence within the UN appears to be coming to an end.

2. Thus, latent problems involving the future effectiveness of the whole organization have been brought to a head at an inauspicious moment for the West -- and, for that matter, for the

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UN itself, which is tackling the longest and thorniest agenda in its history against a backdrop of sharpening cold-war tensions and Soviet ebullience. The situation is tailor-made for infinite Bloc maneuvering and for Bloc manipulation of Afro-Asian delegations on a great number of fronts employing a variety of themes.

3. The precise contours of Soviet strategy vis-a-vis the UN cannot be foreseen at this time, but the USSR's motivations are clear enough. It is determined to prevent the UN from becoming an arena in which cold war points can be scored against the Bloc. To this end it has sought to adapt the UN's machinery to Soviet requirements. From the beginning it has made extensive use of the veto in the Security Council to block initiative aimed against the Bloc, although it has never questioned the power and authority of the Council as such. For a number of years the Soviets have attempted to thwart development of an executive initiative in the General Assembly. Last year, then they apparently came to feel that the number of new uncommitted states flocking into the Assembly assured that its power could not often be used against the Bloc, they launched their campaign against the office of Secretary General, where Dag Hammarskjold was developing an important executive role for himself. They sought by the "troika" to neutralize his efforts and generally to reduce the degree of freedom and power enjoyed by the SYG.

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4. In all of these attacks on the various institutions of the UN, the Soviets have never shown any signs of desiring to withdraw or to wreck completely the organization. Even when they had officially announced they would no longer recognize the authority of Hammarskjöld, they continued to carry on business with his office, addressing themselves not to the man, but to "the Secretariat". They have withheld payment of obligated funds to the organization when such monies were destined for projects unacceptable to them, but have kicked in without a murmur for other commitments. They have bullied, stormed, boycotted, and on more than one occasion openly disrupted the proceedings, but they have always participated in one way or another; their interest has not flagged. While they have fought hard to reshape the UN, they have given no concrete indications that they were prepared to leave if things did not go their way.

5. The foregoing suggests that even when the UN's machinery could be used against them the Soviets regarded membership in the organization as useful to them. They probably view the UN as a uniquely convenient place to curry favor with the new or non-committed nations, as an irreplaceable forum for international propaganda, and, perhaps principally, as a major arena for cold

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war maneuver. They almost certainly contemplate that before long conditions in this arena will be so favorable that they can hector the West at will without fear of absorbing damaging retaliation.

6. To achieve these conditions, however, they are probably aware that they must observe some restraints. They will probably be concerned -- although not unduly so -- with the sensitivities of the Afro-Asian nations, and to a lesser extent the Latin American states. For some months, possibly for some years, we believe they will push hard on the "troika" proposal, but will probably stop short of ramming it down the throats not only of the West, but of a reluctant General Assembly membership. It even possible they will eventually draw back from their extreme position on Communist China, which currently calls not only for the expulsion of Nationalist China from the UN, but for installation of Peiping in a permanent seat with the right of veto.

7. The Soviets will probably be guided on how far they can safely exploit their present advantages on these or any other issues by their estimate of US reactions. They would probably anticipate that the seating of Communist China in the UN would raise a serious political outcry in the US and that subsequent additional setbacks to the US position engineered by the Soviets

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might risk a US withdrawal from the organization. They would be concerned lest a US withdrawal in turn provoke the Afro-Asian states to revise their estimates of the UN's value.

8. The numerous new and uncommitted states in the UN -- mostly Afro-Asian nations, many with strong neutralist persuasions-- regard the organization somewhat differently from either the Bloc or the West. To them membership provides a badge of national maturity and an international stage where, if they are not the stars, they can at least aspire to supporting roles. Most of these states have found the UN particularly useful as an instrument to attack colonialism. In a few instances also the uncommitted states have come to view the organization as a place where far away conflicts may be isolated and their own interests protected from infection. Moreover, for a few of these nations -- particularly the larger and more discerning states, such as India, Indonesia, and Egypt -- the UN figures importantly as a primary element in their national security. They have come to regard it as a means of reducing the direct pressures of the cold war by providing the US and the USSR with a maneuver area which is not a military battlefield. These states also have persuaded themselves that their activities in the UN can be instrumental in reducing the frictions

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between the great powers -- and hence ultimately of preventing their own nations' involvement in international military conflict. It seems likely that as colonial and "neo-colonial" issues dry-up around the world, more and more uncommitted states will come to the same opinion of the UN's primary purpose.

9. The new and uncommitted states have only recently begun to feel their real strength within the world organization. In some cases much of their national diplomatic efforts are expended in exploiting their positions at New York. They are jealous of their new prerogatives and suspicious of the traditional larger powers. At the moment such suspicions as they have are largely directed against their ex-colonial masters of the West rather than against the Bloc. However, a continuing direct Soviet attack on the basic structures and the primary operating assumptions on which the UN is based would, we believe, rapidly divert their suspicions elsewhere. Essentially this means that if the Soviets should refuse to compromise its announced determination to strip the Secretary General's office of any real initiative, or if they were to undertake a deliberate campaign to drive the West, and particularly the US, from the UN in revulsion against Bloc pressures and methods, the Afro-Asian states, while they would not necessarily turn to the West, would probably turn away from the UN in disillusion.

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10. We further believe the Soviets are aware of the foregoing possibility. They almost certainly are conscious of how strongly the neutral nations have committed themselves to the UN. At the same time we believe that the Soviets are highly satisfied with the progress toward their goals that aggressive tactics have already won for them. While they will almost certainly continue to use these tactics, they will feel some obligation to keep one eye on the reactions of the uncommitted states.

11. There is at least an even chance that the Soviets will overestimate how far the neutral states will follow them in attempting to revamp the UN. Over time these states may be led by Soviet threats or blandishments into accepting a series of de facto revisions of the charter whose cumulative effect might ultimately be serious. However, we also believe that these states will sooner or later draw the line -- and that the line will come when the US and its western partners threaten to depart. The uncommitted states would regard a US withdrawal (as they would regard a Soviet withdrawal) as a development which robbed the UN of its most essential quality, that is, of being a chamber for the decompression of dangerous frictions between East and West.

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12. We further believe that for different reasons the Soviets will stop short of such a showdown, at least for the next year or so. They are probably unwilling to lose the excellent field of maneuver with the uncommitted nations provided them by the UN. They will calculate that they have nothing to gain by transforming the organization into a Communist front, where only a few already sympathetic Afro-Asians could be expected to participate. Nevertheless, the next few years will provide the Soviets generous opportunities to exploit the decline of Western strength in the UN and by blackmail or threats to obtain support from a good segment of the uncommitted nations.

13. Whatever the final outcome of the confused period ahead, it appears for the short run, at least, that the new, uncommitted states will be the principal gainers in terms of international prestige and perquisites. Moreover, the susceptibility of some of these states to Bloc pressures indicates that for a time, at least, the Soviets may score some impressive paper victories. In these circumstances the UN itself will probably suffer serious damage to its effectiveness and prestige. The lasting effect of all this, however, will ultimately depend to a considerable degree

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on whether the response of the West is as the champion of the UN
itself or as a preserver of its past pre-eminent position.

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